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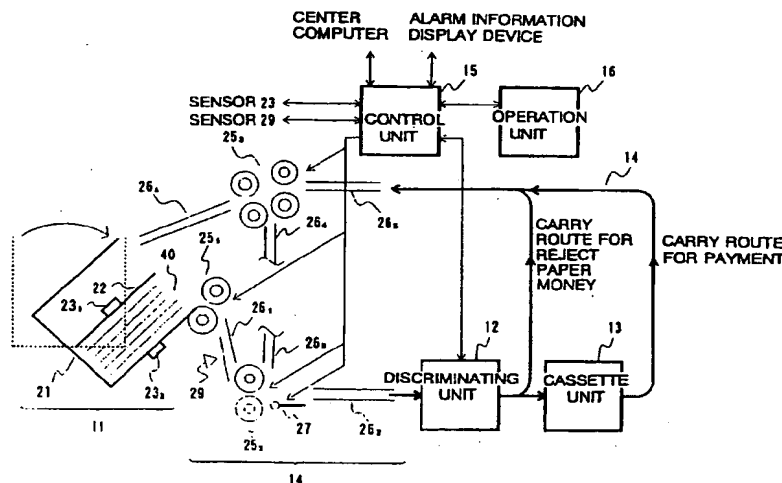
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(54) SHEET PROCESSING APPARATUS

(57) The sheet handling apparatus comprises an inserting unit (11) into which the sheets are put, and a discriminating unit (12) for discriminating among the sheets put into the inserting unit. The sheet handling apparatus further comprises a mechanism for returning, to the inserting unit, the sheets (which have, e.g., no

thread and are inappropriate in sizes) exhibiting predetermined characteristics among the sheets put into the inserting unit without being supplied to the discriminating unit.

FIG. 2



EP 0 817 135 A1

Description

Technical Field

The present invention relates to a sheets handling apparatus for discriminating sheets as to whether genuine or false and handling them and, for example, to a sheets handling apparatus used for actualizing an ATM (Automatic Teller's machine).

Background Arts

In recent years, with advancements of automation in a variety of sectors, apparatuses automatically discriminate among paper money, securities, certificates of tax payments, book coupons, beer coupons, a variety of tickets and admission tickets (which are referred to as sheets).

Specific constructions of such apparatuses (hereinafter termed sheets handling apparatus) differ depending on sheets to be handled by the apparatuses. For instance, the sheets handling apparatus that treats paper money includes an inserting unit into which the sheets are put, a discriminating unit for making a discrimination as to whether or not the sheet put into the inserting unit is appropriate, a discharging unit for discharging the sheet discriminated as inappropriate by the discriminating unit, a storing unit for storing the sheets discriminated as appropriate by the discriminating unit of the sheets handling apparatus treating the paper money, and a carry mechanism for transferring the sheets between the respective units. Further, this sheets handling apparatus includes an operation unit through which the user indicates a content of the operation of the sheet handling apparatus, and a control unit for generally controlling the respective units.

The control unit, when operating the operational unit to indicate a receipt of the paper money, the paper money put into the inserting unit are carried sheet by sheet to the discriminating unit by controlling the inserting unit and the carry mechanism between the inserting unit and the discriminating unit.

The discriminating unit includes an optical sensor for obtaining whole image data in order to acquire information about an external shape, etc. of the paper money, a magnetic sensor for detecting an existence of a magnetic ink, a thickness sensor for detecting a thickness of the paper money, and a dictionary data consisting of the image data, etc. of the appropriate paper money. The discriminating unit makes the discrimination as to whether or not the paper money carried in is appropriate based on the information obtained by the various sensors as well as on the dictionary data. The control unit, if the paper money is discriminated as appropriate by the discriminating unit, stores the storing unit with the paper money by controlling the carry mechanism provided between the discriminating unit and the storing unit. On the other hand, the control unit, if the

paper money is discriminated as inappropriate by the discriminating unit, carries this paper money to the discharging unit by controlling the carry mechanism provided between the discriminating unit and the discharging unit. That is to say, the sheets handling apparatus stores only the paper money discriminated as appropriate by the discriminating unit among the sheets of paper money put into the inserting unit by the user, and returns the paper money other than the above-mentioned money to the user via the discharging unit.

Thus, the conventional sheets handling apparatus is constructed so that the discriminating unit minutely discriminates among the paper money (sheets) put into the inserting unit. Therefore, if a different kind of paper money is mistakenly put thereinto, i.e., when the paper money easily visually discriminated as inappropriate is put thereinto, the inappropriate paper money is each carried to the discriminating unit and, after obtaining a result of the discrimination by the discriminating unit, carried to the discharging unit.

Thus, the conventional sheets handling apparatus, as it happens, performs the futile processes. Further, since it might happen that the inappropriate paper money is carried by the carry mechanism designed for the appropriate paper money, a probability of causing a jam is high in the conventional sheets handling apparatus.

Disclosure of the Invention

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a sheets handling apparatus for efficiently handling sheets put in.

To accomplish the above object, according to the present invention, a sheets handling apparatus comprises a discriminating unit for making discriminations as to whether sheets are appropriate or not, a preparatory discriminating unit for making discriminations as to whether or not the sheets put in have predetermined characteristics, and a supplying unit for supplying the discriminating unit with only the sheets so discriminated by the preparatory discriminating unit as to have the predetermined characteristics.

In the thus constructed first sheets handling apparatus, if the sheet put into the handling apparatus is not appropriate, this sheet is discriminated. Hence, this sheets handling apparatus efficiently handles the sheets put in. Further, obviously inappropriate sheets are not carried to the discriminating unit, and therefore the probability of causing the jam is low in the present sheets handling apparatus.

Moreover, a second sheets handling apparatus according to the present invention comprises a discriminating unit for making discriminations as to whether or not sheets are appropriate or not, a holding unit for holding a plurality of sheets to be discriminated, a fetching unit for sequentially fetching the plurality of sheets held

by the holding unit, a preparatory discriminating unit for making discriminations as to whether or not the sheets fetched by the fetching unit have predetermined characteristics, and a supplying unit for supplying the discriminating unit with only the sheets so discriminated by the preparatory discriminating unit as to have the predetermined characteristics.

In the thus constructed second sheets handling apparatus, there are not discriminated the obviously inappropriate sheet among the sheets put into the handling apparatus. Accordingly, the present sheets handling apparatus invariably efficiently handles the paper money put in. Further, as the obviously inappropriate sheets are not carried to the discriminating unit, the probability of causing the jam is low in the second sheets handling apparatus.

Incidentally, on the occasion of actualizing the second sheets handling apparatus, it is desirable to use a supplying unit for supplying the discriminating unit with the sheets so discriminated by the preparatory discriminating unit as to have the predetermined characteristics, and returning, to the holding unit, the sheets so discriminated by the preparatory discriminating unit as to have no predetermined characteristics.

Furthermore, on the occasion of actualizing the second sheets handling apparatus, there may be used a unit as the preparatory discriminating unit for obtaining data about a shape of the sheet fetched by the fetching unit and, if the obtained data fall within a predetermined range, making such a discrimination that the sheet has the predetermined characteristics. In the case of constructing the sheets handling apparatus in this way, the sheets taking inappropriate shapes are not carried to the discriminating unit, and hence especially the probability of causing the jam can be reduced.

Further, there may be used a unit as the preparatory discriminating unit for detecting whether or not a thread exists on the sheet fetched by the fetching unit, and making a discrimination as to whether or not the sheet has the predetermined characteristics on the basis of a result of the detection. Incidentally, in the case of constructing the sheets handling apparatus treating the sheets having the threads, there is used the preparatory discriminating unit for making such a discrimination that the sheet has the predetermined characteristic when the thread exists on the sheet. Reversely in the case of constructing the sheets handling apparatus treating the sheets having no thread, there is used the preparatory discriminating unit for making such a discrimination that the sheet has the predetermined characteristic when the thread does not exist on the sheet.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a view showing an external shape of a sheets handling apparatus in a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a view showing a construction of the sheet handling apparatus in the first embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a schematic view illustrating paper money treated by the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram showing a discriminating unit provided in the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment;

FIG. 5 is an explanatory flowchart showing operations of the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment;

FIGS. 6 (a) and (b) are schematic views showing carry routes for the paper money in the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment when the paper money discriminated as appropriate and inappropriate in preparatory discriminations, are put in; and

FIG. 7 is an explanatory flowchart showing operations of the sheets handling apparatus in a second embodiment.

Best Mode for Carrying out the Invention

Embodiments of the present invention will hereinafter be specifically described with reference to the drawings.

(First Embodiment)

A sheets handling apparatus in a first embodiment functions as an ATM (automatic teller's machine) for treating paper money having a thread. Note that the thread is a tape composed of a metal or the like and provided for making it difficult to forge sheets by copying them.

FIG. 1 shows an outward appearance of a sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment. As shown in the Figure, a box body of the sheets handling apparatus is provided with an operation unit 16, a card inserting/discharging port 17, a bankbook inserting/discharging port 18, and a paper money inserting/discharging port 19.

The respective units function in the same way as a normal ATM. Namely, the operation unit 16 is constructed of a display device for displaying a message relative to operation procedures, and an input device for inputting various items of information (a password number, an amount of money, a bank account number, etc.). The display device displays a message (image data) corresponding to data given from a control unit (which will be explained in detail later) provided in the sheets handling apparatus. The input device outputs to the control unit the data corresponding to a content of

the operation by the user.

A card recorded with bank account data is inserted into the card inserting/discharging port 17. Provided in rear of the card inserting/discharging port 17 are a device for reading magnetic information stored on the card, a device for reading information written on the surface of the card, and a carry mechanism for supplying the card to these devices. The control unit guides inward the card inserted into the card inserting/discharging port 17 and reads the information held on this card by controlling the carry mechanism and the devices. Then, the control unit, on the basis of the information read therefrom, exchanges the information with a center computer connected via a communications line and recognizes an executable process.

Incidentally, the card inserting/discharging port 17 is used also as a discharge port for a slips recorded with information pertaining to a transaction dealt with. Therefore, a mechanism for executing slip processing is also provided posterior to the card inserting/discharging port 17, and the control unit controls this mechanism.

A banknote is inserted into the banknote inserting/discharging port 18. Provided in rear of the banknote inserting/discharging port 18 is a mechanism for printing a content of the transaction on the banknote inserted thereinto.

The paper money inserting/discharging port 19 functions as a port through which the paper money is inserted and discharged. A mechanism for actually treating the paper money is provided posterior to the paper money inserting/discharging port 19. As already explained, the conventional sheets handling apparatus includes the same mechanism by which the paper money inserted is each discriminated, however, the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment includes a mechanism operating differently therefrom by way of the mechanism actually treating the paper money.

The following is a detailed description of a construction and an operation of the mechanism provided for actually treating the paper money within the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment.

FIG. 2 is a diagram schematically illustrating a construction of the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment. Note that the mechanisms relative to the card inserting/discharging port and the banknote inserting/discharging port operate in the same way with the corresponding mechanisms provided within the normal ATM, and hence the illustrations thereof are omitted in the drawings.

As shown in the Figure, the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment incorporates an inserting unit 11, a discriminating unit 12, a cassette unit 13, and a carry system 14 in charge of carrying the paper money therebetween. Further, the above-mentioned control unit 15 and operation unit 16 are provided within the sheets handling apparatus. Note that the control unit 15 comprises a central processing unit (CPU), a RAM

(Read Only Memory), a RAM (Random Access Memory), a control circuit (a so-called driver) for controlling a variety of drive mechanisms provided within the sheets handling apparatus, and an information communications circuit. The control unit 15 is connected to the respective units via analog or digital signal lines (buses) within the handling apparatus. Further, as already explained, the control unit 15 is connected to the center computer that controls the information relative to the users via the communications lines. Moreover, the control unit 15 is connected also to an alarm information display device. Incidentally, the alarm information display device is a computer for controlling operation conditions of the sheets handling apparatus, and is normally installed in a place where a manager of the sheets handling apparatus stays.

The inserting unit 11 is used when transferring and receiving the paper money between the user and the sheets handling apparatus, and corresponds to the paper money inserting/discharging port 19 (FIG. 1). The inserting unit 11 includes a paper container 21 having an opening, and a partition 22 for partitioning a space within the paper money container 21 into two spaces. One space (hereinafter referred to as a first space) partitioned by the partition 22 is used for temporarily holding the paper money that should be stored in the sheet handling apparatus, while the other space (hereinafter termed a second space) is used for holding the paper money that should be received by the user. Further, the inserting unit 11 also includes a drive mechanism (unillustrated) for changing a position of the partition 22 within the paper money container 21. This drive mechanism is connected via a control signal line to the control unit 15, and the control unit 15 moves the partition 22 to a position corresponding to a condition thereat by controlling the drive mechanism, using the control signal line (which will be described in greater detail).

Further, the inserting port 11 includes a sensor 23 for detecting whether or not the paper money is held in the first space. The sensor 23 consists of a light emitting element 23¹ fixed to the partition 22 so that the first space can be irradiated with a light beam, and a light receiving element 23² fixed in a position upon which the light beam from the light emitting element 23¹ is incident. The light emitting element 23¹ and the light receiving element 23² are respectively connected to the control unit 15 via the signal lines, and the control unit 15 judges whether or not the paper money is held in the inserting unit 11 (in the first space of the paper money holding container 21) by use of those signal lines. That is to say, the control unit 15 controls the light emitting element 23¹ to output a light beam with a predetermined level, and detects a level of a signal outputted from the light receiving element 23² corresponding thereto. Then, if the detected level is under the level which is predetermined on the basis of the signal level when no paper money exists, it is determined that the paper money exists in the inserting unit 11.

The inserting unit 11 having such a construction is fixed through a rotary mechanism controlled by the control unit 15 to the box body of the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment so as to take an attitude indicated by a dotted line and an attitude indicated by a solid line in the Figure. Note that the attitude indicated by the dotted line is such an attitude that the opening of the paper container 21 is directed toward an opening/closing cover provided on the box body, and, if operated to indicate the operation unit 16 to receive the money, the control unit 15 makes the paper money container 21 take this attitude. Further, the control unit 15 changes the position of the partition 22 so that the paper money is inserted into only the first space, and uncloses the opening/closing cover. Incidentally, as already stated, the present sheets handling apparatus treats the paper money having the thread and is, specifically, constructed as a handling apparatus which treats, as schematically illustrated in FIG. 3, the paper money provided with a thread 41 extending in a direction parallel to the short side of paper money 40. Further, the paper money 40 is inserted into the inserting unit 11 in such a form as to be indicated by an arrow head. That is, the paper money 40 is held in the first space of the inserting unit 11 so that a longitudinal direction thereof is parallel to a depthwise direction of the paper money container 21.

After being operated to indicate the operation unit 16 to receive the money, and when detecting that predetermined operations (receipt of money, and input of information) have been done, the control unit 15 closes the opening/closing cover. Subsequently, the control unit 15 moves the partition 22 toward a wall surface, on the side of the first space, of the paper money container 21 and tilts the paper money container 21 to facilitate a feed-out of the paper money from the paper money container 21. Then, the control unit 15 starts controlling the carry system 14.

Before explaining a construction and a function of the carry system 14, an outline of the discriminating unit 12 and the cassette unit 13 will be described. At first, a construction and an operation of the discriminating unit 12 are explained with reference to FIG. 4.

As shown in the Figure, the discriminating unit 12 has a sensor unit 31, an amplifier circuit unit 32, an A/D converting unit 33, an image processing unit 34, a storage unit 35, and a control/judging unit 36.

The sensor unit 31 is constructed of a few sensors for obtaining various items of data (image data, magnetic data and thickness data) relative to the paper money. The amplifier circuit unit 32 amplifies the analog signals outputted by the respective sensors within the sensor unit 31. The A/D converting unit 33 converts the analog signals from the amplifier circuit unit 32 into digital signals, and supplies the thus converted digital signals to the control/judging unit 36 or the image processing unit 34. Note that the A/D converting unit 33 is controlled by the control/judging unit 36 so as to sup-

ply the image processing unit 34 with the image data and supply the control/judging unit 36 with other data. Further, the control/judging unit 36 controls the respective sensors within the sensor unit 31 and an operation timing of the A/D converting unit 33.

The image processing unit 34 image-processes the image data supplied from the A/D converting unit 33. The control/judging unit 36 compares the image data outputted by the image processing unit 34 with the image data stored as dictionary data in the storage unit 35. Further, the control/judging unit 36 compares other items of data (magnetic data, and thickness data) given from the A/D converting unit 33 with corresponding data stored as dictionary data in the storage unit 35, and discriminating between appropriate or inappropriate as to the paper money from a result of the comparison. Then, the control/judging unit 36 notifies the control unit of a result of the discrimination.

The discriminating unit 12 operating in this way is connected via the carry system 14 to the inserting unit 11 of the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment.

The cassette unit 13 is constructed of a plurality of cassettes for storing the sheets of paper money according to classifications of the money. The cassette unit 13 is connected via the carry system 14 to the discriminating unit 12 and is stored with the paper money discriminated as appropriate by the discriminating unit 12.

Next, a construction of the carry system 14 is explained.

The carry system 14 is a carry route for the paper money between the inserting unit 11, the discriminating unit 12 and the cassette unit 13, and is constructed of such elements as a roller unit 25, a carry path 26 and a route switching unit 27. Note that there are omitted illustrations of elements relative to the carry route for returning the paper money (reject paper money) discriminated as inappropriate by the discriminating unit 12 to the inserting unit 11, and to the carry route extending from the cassette unit 13 to the inserting unit 11 which route is used when paying the money in FIG. 2. Further, several roller units, though provided between a carry path 26³ and a carry path 26⁶, are also omitted in their illustrations.

Each roller unit 25 consists of some (normally two) rollers and a roller drive mechanism for rotating these rollers. Each roller unit 25 (roller drive mechanism) is electrically connected to the control unit 15 and controlled by the control unit 15. Provided between the two roller units 25 is the carry path 26 serving as a element for guiding the paper money fed out by one roller unit 25 to the other roller unit 25.

The roller unit 25¹ is driven when feeding the paper money 40 out of the inserting unit 11 (paper money container 21). The roller unit 25² is driven for supplying the next roller unit 25 with the paper money fed out by the roller unit 25¹. As shown in the Figure, the carry path 26² for carrying the paper money toward the discrimi-

nating unit 12 and the carry path 26³ for transferring the paper money toward the roller unit 25³, are provided on the discharging side of the roller unit 25². Provided further between the roller unit 25² and the carry paths 26², 26³ is the route switching unit 27 for guiding the paper money fed out of the roller unit 25² to one of the carry paths 26², 26³. Note that the route switching unit 27 is constructed of a flap and an actuator electrically connected to the control unit 15.

Moreover, the carry path 26¹ provided between the roller unit 25¹ and the roller unit 25² includes a sensor 29. The sensor 29 is an element for detecting whether the paper money has the thread or not, and an output of the sensor 29 is inputted to the control unit 15. Incidentally, in the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment, a magnet resistance element is used as the sensor 29.

The roller unit 25³ has four rollers. The roller unit 25³ is used for supplying the paper money supplied via the carry path 26⁵ toward in a direction of the carry path 26⁶ as well as for supplying the paper money supplied from the roller unit 25² via the carry path 26⁴ in the direction of the carry path 26⁶.

Hereinafter, a general operation (control procedures by the control unit 15) of the present sheets handling apparatus will be described with reference to FIGS. 2, 5 and 6. Note that FIG. 5 is a flowchart showing the control procedures by the control unit 15 when the paper money container 21 (inserting unit 11) takes the attitude shown in FIG. 2. Namely, the control unit 15 detects that the paper money has been completely set in the inserting unit 11, and starts the control along the flow shown in the flowchart after tilting the paper money container 21. Further, FIG. 6 is a schematic view showing the carry path for the paper money within the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment.

After tilting the inserting unit 11 enough to feed out the paper money, the control unit 15 starts controlling the roller unit 25¹ to feed only one sheet of paper money out of the inserting unit 11 (step S101). Further, simultaneously with the start of this control, the control unit 15 launches monitoring the signals from the sensor 29. Then, when the sensor 29 outputs a signal higher than the predetermined level within a predetermined time, i.e., when the thread exists on the paper money passing through the carry path 26¹ (step S102; Y), the control unit 15 controls the route switching unit 27 so that the paper money from the roller unit 25² is guided to the carry path 26², and controls the respective roller units 25 constituting the carry route extending to the discriminating unit 12, thereby carrying the paper money to the discriminating unit 12 (step S103). That is to say, the control unit 15 controls the respective units so that the paper money is carried on the route indicated by the arrowhead in FIG. 6(a).

Then, the control unit 15 makes the discriminating unit 12 discriminate this paper money and, if the discriminating unit 12 notifies it of a result of the discrimina-

tion showing the appropriateness of the paper money (step S104; appropriate), controls the roller unit relative to the carry route extending from the discriminating unit 12 to the cassette unit 13, thereby carrying this paper money to the cassette unit 13 and storing it (step S105). Thereafter, whether or not non-discriminated paper money is left in the inserting unit 11 is judged by controlling the sensor 23 provided in the inserting unit 11. If left (step S108; Y), the processing returns to step S101, and a process concerning the next paper money is started.

Further, if the result of the discrimination by the discriminating unit 14 shows the inappropriateness of the paper money (step S104; inappropriate), the control unit 15 forms a carry route extending from the discriminating unit 12 to the inserting unit 11 by controlling the unillustrated route switching unit. Then, the paper money discriminated as inappropriate (reject paper money) by the discriminating unit 12 is sent back to the inserting unit 11 (the second space if the paper money container 21) by controlling the roller unit relative to the same carry route (step S106). Further, the control unit 15 notifies the alarm information display device of the inappropriate paper money being detected (step S108), and proceeds to step S108. Incidentally, the control unit 15 also notifies the alarm information display device of the fact that the paper money is judged to be inappropriate in the discrimination by the discriminating unit 12 in step S108. Subsequently, the alarm information display device receiving this notification displays a message indicating that the paper money judged to be inappropriate by the discriminating unit 12 is put into the sheets handling apparatus.

On the other hand, when detecting that no thread exists on the paper money during passage through the carry path 26¹ on the basis of the signal from the sensor 29 (step S102; N), the control unit 15 controls the route switching unit 27 so that the paper money fed out of the roller unit 25² advances toward not the discriminating unit 12 but the roller unit 25³. Then, the control unit 15 controls the roller unit 25³ or the like, thereby returning this paper money into the inserting unit 11 (the second space of the paper money container 21) via the carry paths 26⁴, 26⁶. Further, along with such control, the control unit 15 notifies the alarm information display device of the paper money being judged to be inappropriate not in the discrimination by the discriminating unit 12 but in a preparatory discrimination by the sensor 29 (step S107). Then, the alarm information display device receiving this notification displays a message indicating that the paper money judged to be inappropriate in the preparatory discrimination is put into the sheets handling apparatus.

Subsequently, the control unit 15, if the non-discriminated paper money remains in the inserting unit 11 (step S108; Y), returns to step S101 and starts a process relative to the next paper money. Then, when finishing the discriminations of all the paper money put into

the inserting unit 11 (step S108; N), the processes shown in the Figure are ended. Then, the control unit 15 executes processes such as printing the slip and exchanging the information with the center computer. Moreover, if on the execution of steps S106 and S107, the inserting unit 11, etc. is controlled so that the user is able to take out the paper money held in the inserting unit (the second space of the paper money container 21). Further, on this occasion, the control unit 15 also controls the operation unit 16 to display the messages corresponding to a series of discriminated results about the paper money (which include the result of the preparatory discrimination).

Thus, the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment is constructed in such a way that the paper money which can be discriminated as inappropriate without being discriminated by the discriminating unit among the sheets of paper money put into the inserting unit, are sent back to the inserting unit without being supplied to the discriminating unit. That is to say, in this sheets handling apparatus, the discrimination about the paper money conceived obviously inappropriate is not much of a time-consuming operation. Further, the sheets clearly conceived inappropriate are not carried to the discriminating unit, and hence a probability of causing a jam in the carry system is decreased.

In addition, the message corresponding to the discriminated result is displayed on the operation unit 16, and therefore the user is able to easily recognize the reason why the paper money is returned to. Moreover, the alarm information display device is also informed of the discriminated result, and hence the manager is capable of taking an immediate measure corresponding to the content thereof.

(Second Embodiment)

A sheets handling apparatus in a second embodiment is a modified version of the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment, and therefore only different constructions and operations are herein explained.

The sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment is a handling apparatus for making the preparatory discrimination among the sheets of paper money by detecting whether the thread exists thereon or not. Contrastingly, the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment is constructed to make the preparatory discrimination by detecting a shape of the paper money.

More specifically, in the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment, two optical sensors for detecting a width of the paper money are provided in the portion provided with the sensor 29 consisting of the magnetic resistance element in the sheets handling apparatus (see FIG. 2) in the first embodiment. The two optical sensors are disposed on the carry path 26¹ so that an interval therebetween in a direction orthogonal to the advancing direction of the paper money is set to a

minimum value of the paper money treated by the sheets handling apparatus.

Further, a thickness sensor for measuring a thickness of the paper money is provided on the carry path 26¹ in the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment. The thickness sensor is constructed of two rollers combined so that an interval between the rollers changes corresponding to the thickness of the paper money passing through between the rollers, and of a sensor, fitted to a rotary shaft of one roller, for outputting a signal of a level corresponding to the interval with the other roller.

Then, the control unit 15 in the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment, as shown in FIG. 7, judges whether the shape of the paper money is appropriate or not on the basis of the signals from those sensors, and determines whether the paper money should be supplied to the discriminating unit 12 or returned to the inserting unit 11 on the basis of a result of the above judgement. Note that the operations of the control unit 15 in respective steps excluding step S202 are the same as those of the control unit 15 in the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment. Therefore, only the operation in step S202 is herein described.

In step S202, the control unit 15 measures levels of the signals from the two optical sensors. Then, when detecting that the two optical sensors output the signals assuming the level indicating the existence of the paper money, a judgement is that the paper money has an appropriate width. In cases other than this, a judgement is that the paper money has no appropriate width. Further, the control unit 15 also measures a time for which the two sensors output the signal of the level indicating the existence of the paper money. Then, if the measured time is under a preset fiducial time, the control unit 15 judges that the paper money as a target for the preparatory discrimination has an inappropriate length. Moreover, the control unit 15 detects a thickness of the paper money that is on the passage through the carry path 26¹ on the basis of the signal from the thickness sensor. Then, the control unit 15, if the detected thickness does not fall within a predetermined range, judges that the preparatory discrimination target paper money has an inappropriate thickness.

Then, if all appropriate in terms of the width, the length and the thickness, the control unit 15 diverges to a "Y" side in order to carry the paper money to the discriminating unit 12 (step S203). Whereas if inappropriate in one of the width, the length and the thickness, the control unit 15 diverges to a "N" side in order to return the paper money to the inserting unit 11 without supplying it to the discriminating unit 12 (step S207).

As discussed so far, the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment is constructed so that the paper money having the inappropriate shape amongst the sheets of paper money put into the inserting unit is sent back to the inserting unit without being supplied to

the discriminating unit. That is to say, in this sheets handling apparatus, the discrimination among the sheets of paper money conceived obviously inappropriate is not much of the time-consuming operation. In addition, the sheets, which are small in size and thickness enough to cause a jam, are not sent to the discriminating unit, and hence there must be decreases the probability of causing the jam in the carry system.

(Modified Embodiment)

The sheets handling apparatus in the first and second embodiments can be modified in a variety of forms. For example, the sheets handling apparatus in the first embodiment is modified so that the processing diverges to step S107 if the thread exists in step S102 and diverges to step S103 whereas if not. If modified in this way, it is feasible to obtain the sheets handling apparatus that eliminates the paper money having the thread by the preparatory discrimination. Furthermore, the sheets handling apparatus in the first and second embodiments, though the inserting unit functioning as the inserting/discharging port for the paper money, may be separately provided with a mechanism functioning as a discharging port. Moreover, the sheets handling apparatus in the second embodiment detects the width, the length and the thickness of the paper money, but can be constructed to detect one or two items of data thereabout. Additionally, the sheets handling apparatus may be constructed so that the preparatory discrimination is performed based on other items of data (e.g., colors).

Claims

1. A sheets handling apparatus comprising:

discriminating means for making discriminations as to whether sheets are appropriate or not;

preparatory discriminating means for making discriminations as to whether or not the sheets put in have predetermined characteristics; and

supplying means for supplying said discriminating means with only the sheets so discriminated by said preparatory discriminating means as to have the predetermined characteristics.

2. A sheets handling apparatus comprising:

discriminating means for making discriminations as to whether or not sheets are appropriate or not;

holding means for holding a plurality of sheets

to be discriminated;

fetching means for sequentially fetching the plurality of sheets held by said holding means;

preparatory discriminating means for making a discrimination as to whether or not the sheets fetched by said fetching means have predetermined characteristics; and

supplying means for supplying said discriminating means with only the sheets so discriminated by said preparatory discriminating means as to have the predetermined characteristics.

3. A sheets handling apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said supplying means supplies said discriminating means with the sheets so discriminated by said preparatory discriminating means as to have the predetermined characteristics, and returns, to said holding means, the sheets so discriminated by said preparatory discriminating means as to have no predetermined characteristics.
4. A sheets handling apparatus according to any one of claims 2 and 3, wherein said preparatory discriminating means obtains data about a shape of the sheet fetched by said fetching means and, if the obtained data fall within a predetermined range, makes such a discrimination that the sheet has the predetermined characteristics.
5. A sheets handling apparatus according to any one of claims 2 and 3, wherein said preparatory discriminating means detects whether or not a thread exists on the sheet fetched by said fetching means, and makes a discrimination as to whether or not the sheet has the predetermined characteristics on the basis of a result of the detection.

FIG. 1

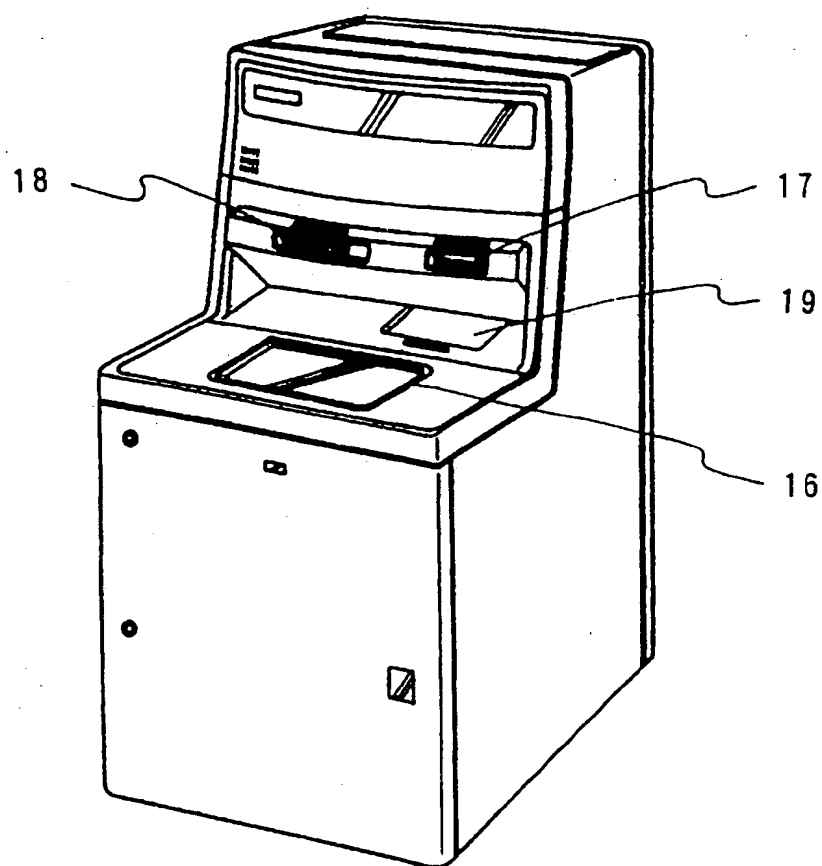


FIG. 2

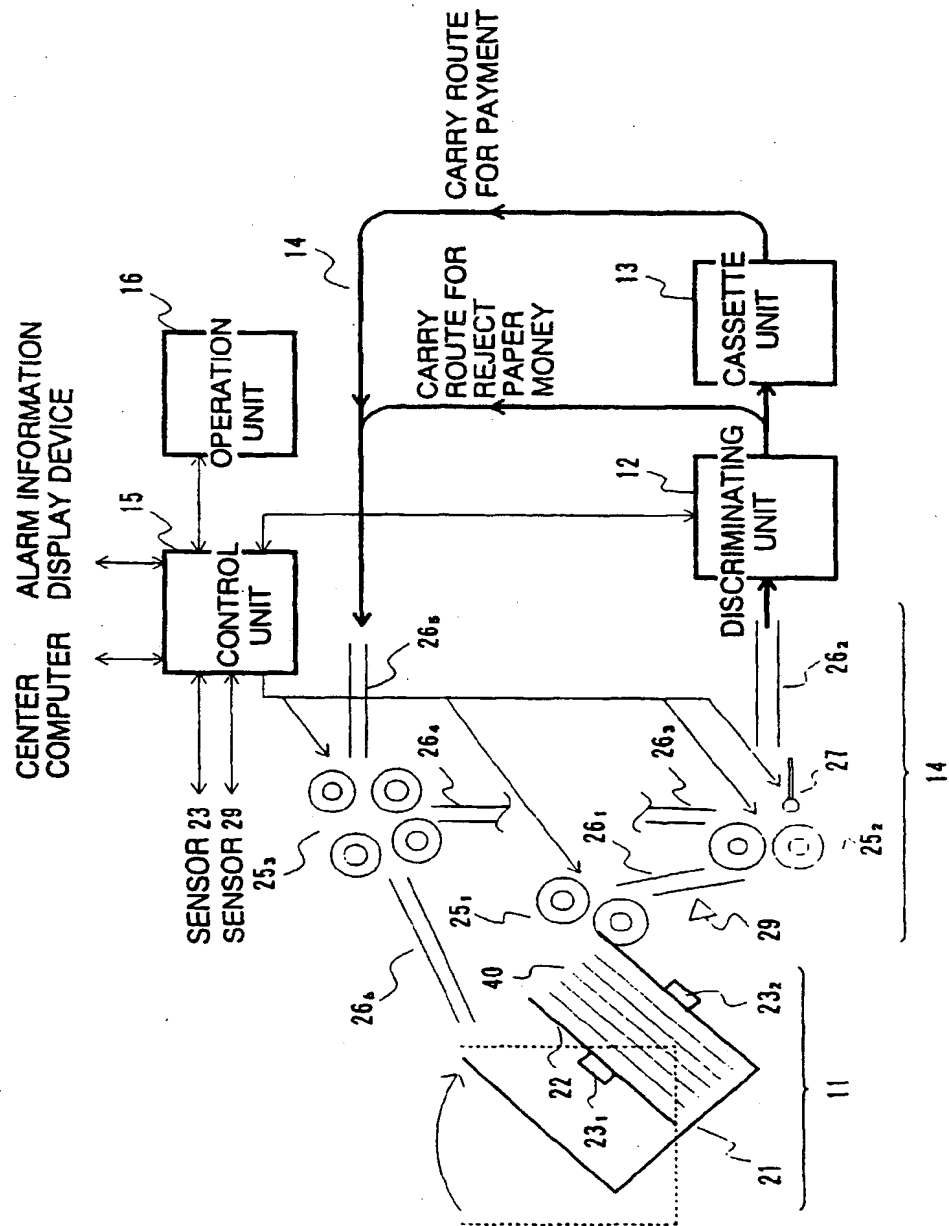


FIG. 3

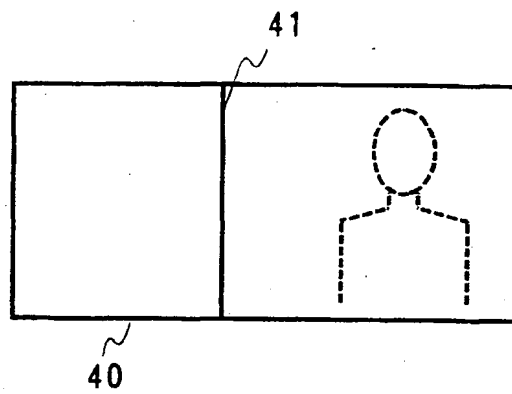


FIG. 4

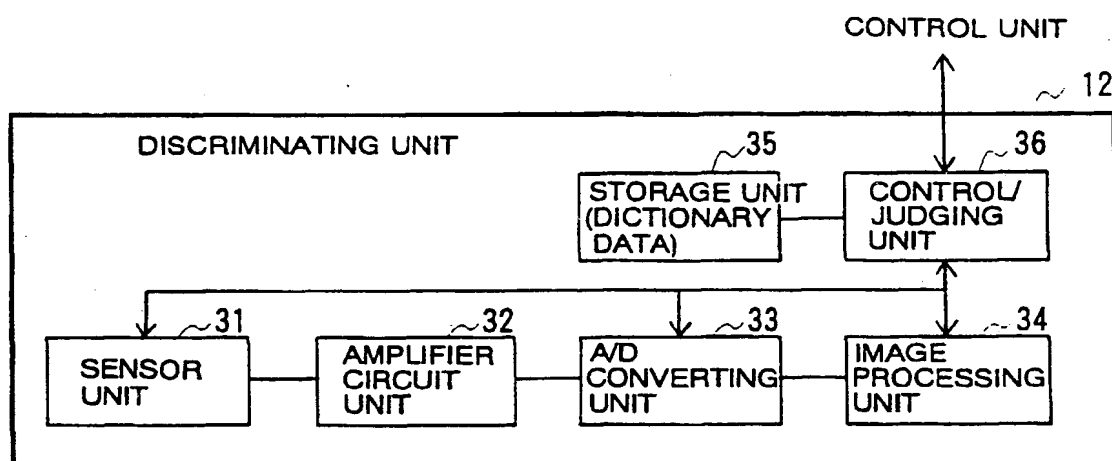


FIG. 5

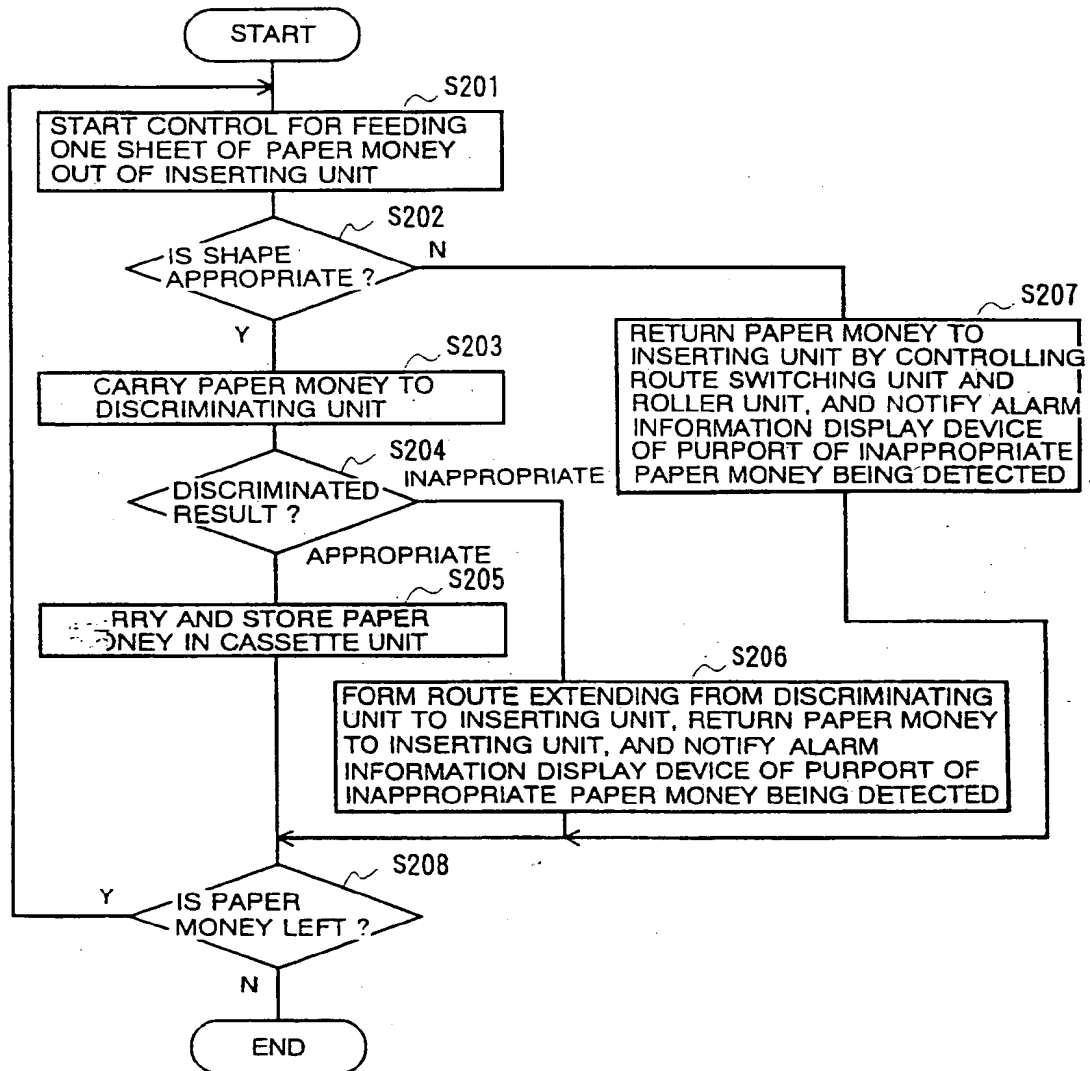


FIG. 6

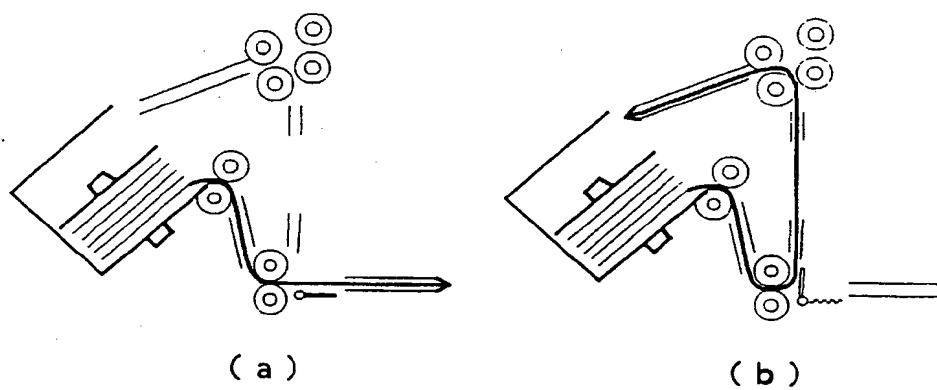
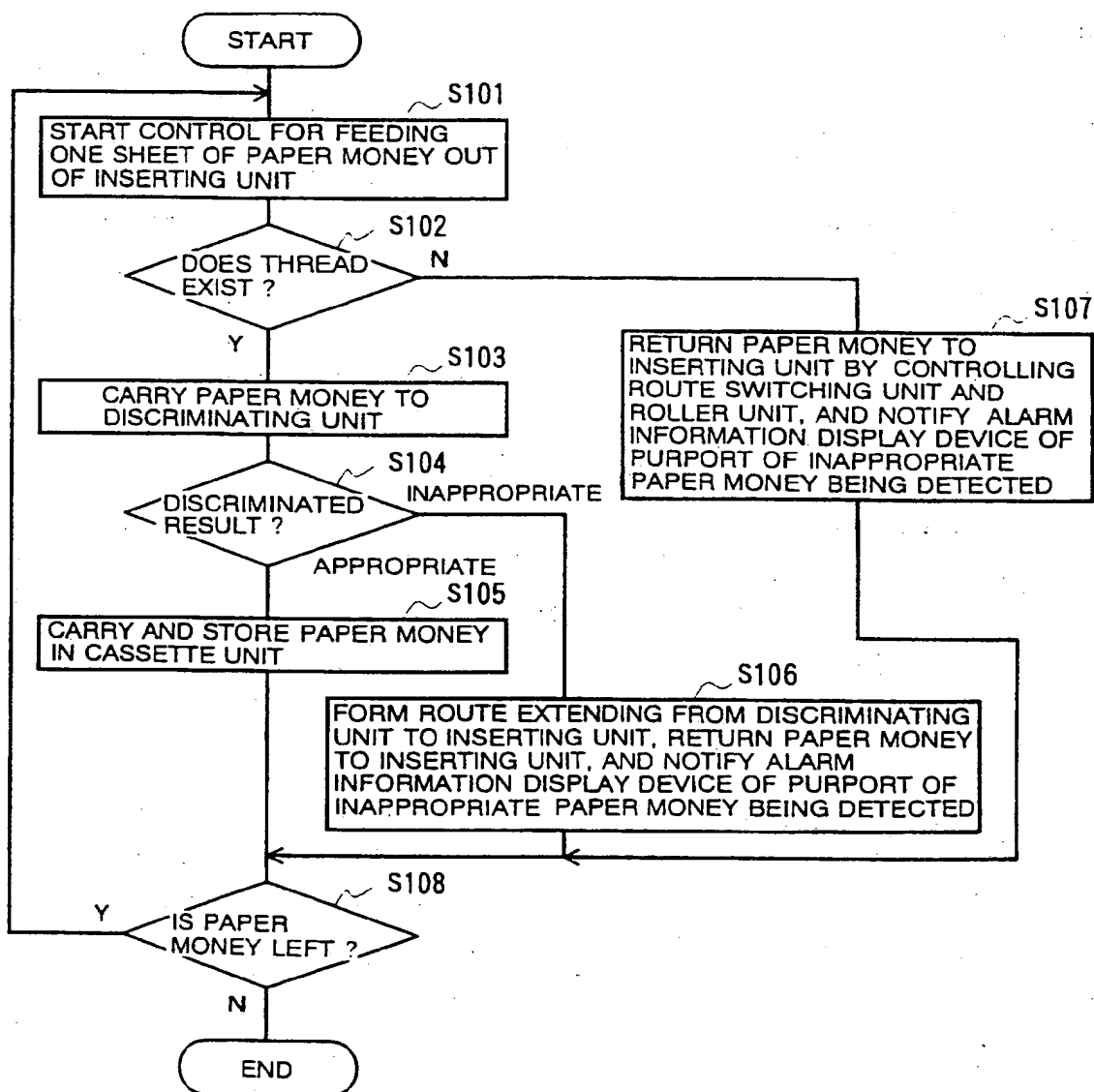


FIG. 7



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP96/03424

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER Int. Cl ⁶ G07D7/00 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) Int. Cl ⁶ G07D7/00 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1926 - 1996 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971 - 1996 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994 - 1996 Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	JP, 54-139600, A (Omron Corp.),	1 - 4
Y	October 30, 1979 (30. 10. 79) (Family: none)	5
X	JP, 50-60090, U (Omron Corp.),	1 - 4
Y	June 3, 1975 (03. 06. 75) (Family: none)	5
Y	JP, 58-17877, A (Fujitsu Ltd.),	1 - 4
A	February 2, 1983 (02. 02. 83) (Family: none)	5
Y	JP, 61-72387, A (Toshiba Corp.),	5
	April 14, 1986 (14. 04. 86) (Family: none)	
Y	JP, 63-303494, A (Glory Ltd.),	5
	December 12, 1988 (12. 12. 88) (Family: none)	
Y	JP, 58-175091, A (Toshiba Corp.),	5
	October 14, 1983 (14. 10. 83) (Family: none)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search February 6, 1997 (06. 02. 97)		Date of mailing of the international search report February 18, 1997 (18. 02. 97)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office Facsimile No.		Authorized officer Telephone No.

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